

Western Montana Resource Advisory Council
Minutes
October 30, 2003
Billings, Montana

Members Present: Sue Marxer (Chair), Dick Young, Susan Lenard, Doug Abelin, Ben Deeble, Dennis Phillippi, Ted Coffman, Roger Peters and Robin Urban.

Members Absent: Robin McCulloch, Donna Tate McDonald, Robin Cunningham, Garry Williams, Pat Flowers and Dan Lucas.

BLM: Rick Hotaling (Butte Field Manager), Pat Fosse (Dillon Field Office), Nancy Anderson (Missoula Field Manager), Marilyn Krause (Facilitator) and Cheryl Atkins (Notes).

Guests: **BLM:** Ruth Miller (Butte Field Office); **Members of the public:** Karen Lincoln (Contractor outreach).

The council convened at 8:00 a.m. with the facilitator covering introductions, ground rules, and agenda review.

Sustaining Working Landscapes (SWL):

(Continued from yesterday's meeting) - see attached letter for previous day decisions.

Concept 2: Reserve Common Allotments

2.5 Up to 5 percent of allotments or 10 percent of BLM acreage within a field office could be committed to RCAs.

2.6 OK as written

2.7 Dropped, already in regulations

Concept 3: Voluntary Allotment Restructuring

Do not respond to entire concept.

Decision: Six RAC members were in favor of not responding to the concept and three can "live with" not responding.

Concept 4: Conservation Easements

Susan Lenard and Bee Deeble spoke in support of Conservation Easements and indicated that any support on their part of the Sustaining Working Landscapes Initiative was contingent upon the Conservation Easement portion being reinstated in the Initiative.

Decision: 8 in favor of proposal and 1 can “live with it”.

Concept 5: Endangered Species Act Mitigation

BLM should promote or create incentives or direct financial rewards for permittees who manage their private land to provide for improved habitat for species currently listed under the Endangered Species Act or candidate species. (This program could be tied to “Candidate Conservation Agreements” for an area or allotment.)

Decision: All in favor.

Pilot Project:

In addition to the concepts of Sustaining Working Landscapes, the Western Montana RAC offers the following as a pilot project:

Allotment Stewardship Project (Pilot Project):

BLM is considering on setting up a pilot project in each Field Office in which joint resource management objectives are developed and monitored by BLM, RAC and permittee. Livestock management is developed by the permittee.

- 5-year project
- no change in AUM’s without environmental review
- permittee is nominated by BLM/chosen by RAC
- annual monitoring of allotment
- if allotment is not meeting objectives, project could be terminated
- conduct baseline inventory relevant to resource objectives

RAC: All in favor. Sue will call members that were absent to get a vote.

The letter to the State Director from the RAC with decisions that were made would like to add the following into the letter:

“The Western Montana RAC appreciates the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service recognizing that fragmentation is a problem in the West and applauds their efforts to address this issue”

The letter will be sent to the State Director and Congressionals. (The RAC needs a quorum).

Limestone Hills Withdrawal (Rick Hotaling):

Welcome Karen Lincoln, who is the contractor outreach for the withdrawal.

See Handout

Sue: Do you need a subgroup?

Rick: After the first of the year we will let you know if we need one. If we do, it will probably be mining related issues.

Butte Resource Management Plan (RMP) (Ruth Miller):

See handout

FIELD OFFICE OVERVIEWS:

Dillon Field Office (Pat Fosse):

- **Watershed Assessments:**

Missoula Field Office (Nancy Anderson):

- **Personnel:** Assistant Field Manager for Renewable Resources – working through the selection process. NEPA/Panning Coordinator – working through the selection process. We will be advertising for a Forester and a Fuels Management Specialist.
- **The Blackfoot Community Project:** The Blackfoot Challenge held a press conference on October 9, 2003, to announce the agreement for the purchase of approximately 41,000 acres of Plum Creek lands by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). If the first phase of the project is successful, TNC may purchase an additional 48,000 acres. The total acquisition would occur over a five year period. The Blackfoot Challenge is working with community groups to develop a disposition and management plan to guide the ownership and management of these lands over the long term.
- We are continuing to work on our watershed assessments. We will be working collaboratively with the Forest Service on our environmental assessment addressing lands which were contained in our Flint Creek watershed assessment (approximately 8,600 acres in the Philipsburg area).
- We received nine bids for the Linton mine reclamation. The low bidder was Smith Contracting, Inc. in Butte, Montana
- We sold our two timber sales in the Lower Blackfoot Corridor. The sales involve approximately 800 MBF.
- We sent a letter jointly with FWP to the Recreation Steering Committee requesting their assistance on our Blackfoot Special Recreation Permit project. The first meeting is tentatively scheduled for the first week in November.

Butte Field Office (Rick Hotaling):

- **Limestone Hills Withdrawal:** The Notice of Intent to process the withdrawal was published on September 4, 2003. The scoping period begins with the publication of the NOI and runs for 60 days. There will be public scoping meetings in Townsend and Helena the end of September.
- **Butte RMP:** The contract has been awarded to Tetra Tech from Helena. We are planning an internal kickoff meeting for the revision on September 17 and 18. We are working on the NOI and will be holding scoping meetings in Butte, Helena, Townsend, Bozeman, Boulder, and Wise River near the end of October or the first part of November.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, February 19, 2004.

LOCATION: Missoula Field Office, Missoula, Montana

TOPICS:

- Updates on Dillon/Butte/Limestone Hills planning processes
- Election of Chair/Vice-Chair (Chair will plan meeting dates for 2004)
- Weeds
- Pilot projects
- LWCF projects
- Out-year budget planning initiatives
- Update on grazing regulations *

Comment (Rick H.):

I appreciate the participation of the RAC. The comments that were made yesterday, if the RAC feels BLM is shutting them out, please let me know.

MEETING ADJOURNED